

## **Vegetation Management:**

# **Cutting Back the Threats to PUD Lines and Customers**

As spring moves through its warmest and wettest days, one would be mistaken to think the weather that threatens the Grays Harbor PUD's infrastructure has passed. While the wind storms that come with life on the Washington coast are not common in the spring and summer, the rapid spring growth of trees and plants can quietly threaten power lines just as much as a gale; but not if Jeff McClain has anything to say about it. This spring, McClain is charged with heading up the PUD's vegetation management efforts; no small task when you consider the size of the district.

"We have about 1,100 miles of distribution lines and 225 miles of transmission lines and about half of them have trees growing under or next to them," said McClain, a second generation PUD worker whose father and brother work for electric utilities. "Trees grow very quickly here. It's an ongoing battle."

PUD lines are threatened both by tree branches falling from above and trees growing up from below. Overhanging branches can be weighted down by snow or blown down by wind, sending them crashing into the lines and knocking out power to hundreds

of customers. Trees growing into the power lines can cause a fire hazard and pose a threat to anyone who climbs or touches them. Using PUD crews and professional tree trimmers, McClain and his team cut, mow and spray around the lines to keep those threats from getting out of hand.

"We have bucket crews that trim branches up to 65 feet and ground cutting crews that get to those areas that are harder for the bucket teams to reach," said McClain. "During the spring and summer we also spray around substations, facilities and right-of-ways just to keep that growth at bay."

In addition to working on scheduled trimming of fast growing trees, McClain responds to several calls per day from PUD customers who are concerned with trees and branches that they believe may be threatening their power lines.

"If it's a danger to our lines we will take care of it," said McClain. "If we don't do preventative maintenance like this, outages would go up considerably. We're never going to stop all of it, but we can slow it down. It's something we have to do."



## Grays Harbor PUD Adopts New Mission Statement

The Grays Harbor PUD Board of Commissioners has found 13 words that capture the goal of the District and will be the core of the district's operations and activities. On April 7, the board adopted a resolution officially recognizing the statement: "Serve our community with high value utility services at the lowest practical cost" as the district's mission statement.

"A mission statement captures the purpose of an organization," said Commission President Russ Skolrood. "When you strip away everything else this is what the PUD is here to do. It's not a long explanation or an overly detailed description; it is a statement of what we provide to the customers we were elected and hired to serve."

The statement will be at the heart of PUD strategy for years to come and acknowledges the district's service to its customer-owners, the quality of the power and telecommunications services it provides, and the responsibility to accomplish it all at a practical price.

"This is one of those moments when customers and employees alike can be proud," said PUD General Manager Dave Ward. "This statement points the Grays Harbor PUD toward a bright future."

## PUD Services Complemented by Local Business Owner

"I'm here to thank you for having such stellar employees ... they really saved my bacon."

That was how Aberdeen business owner Gary Randall opened his address to the Grays Harbor PUD Commissioners on Monday, April 7. The owner of Servicemaster and Envirotech Contractor Services attended the Monday meeting to single out the PUD employees who helped make his move from West Heron Street to Industrial Parkway Drive much easier.

Randall moved his operations in March and found that due to damage suffered during past construction work on the Port Industrial Road, the internet provider he was using would be unable to continue their service at his new location. With no other provider able to provide the services he needed, Randall's goal of moving his operations by the end of March looked increasingly unlikely. It was then that a business acquaintance told him of the fiber optic service provided by the PUD. Working with PUD employees Gary Malone, Alice King, Michael Moore and Eric Jackson, Randall was able to run cable to his new building and begin service with a new provider before the end of March.

"They got me in a lot sooner than I thought they would. They worked tirelessly. They were very professional and they cared about what we were doing there," said Randall. "I don't expect that kind of service from a government agency, so to see it, I was really proud to say 'It's my PUD.'"

## Commission Meeting Dates

Meetings are held in the Nichols Building, 220 Myrtle Street, Hoquiam.

### May 2014

Monday - May 5  
Monday - May 19

### June 2014

Monday - June 2  
Monday - June 16

**Regular business meetings are scheduled to begin at 4:30 pm.** A one hour workshop (3:30 to 4:30 pm) will precede each business meeting, unless otherwise noted. The public is welcome to attend all commission meetings, special meetings, workshops and public hearings. **Public comment periods are included at the open and close of every meeting.**

Commission meetings may be cancelled and special meetings may be scheduled. Please visit our website ([www.ghpud.org](http://www.ghpud.org)) for updated information.

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## Commissioners Corner

by Dave Timmons, District Two

The past several months as a Commissioner have been a whirlwind for me. We have had the privilege to work on many projects and implement some very positive changes at the Grays Harbor PUD. Last month Commissioner Skolrood wrote about our work on our new strategic plan. As he said in his article, we worked with General Manager Dave Ward and his enthusiastic and dedicated Senior Leadership Team that he has assembled, including employees new to leadership positions at GHPUD. I want to use this opportunity to introduce two of those new members. Two of the employees, Steve Easton and Dale Benner have worked at GHPUD for many years and have long been recognized for their strong work ethic, leadership, and dedication to GHPUD. In my time as a Commissioner neither have been shy to voice their opinions (mostly in a positive way) when they had an idea or suggestion to improve the service we provide to you or to improve safety for our staff. I have always appreciated their willingness to share their views.



### **Steve Easton**

*As the District's Line Superintendent and Interim Operations Manager, I have the distinct honor of being the first point-of-contact for the District's Operations Departments. This includes providing support and oversight for a great team of highly skilled and trained frontline leaders in the Line, Substation, Meter, System Dispatch and Vegetation Management/Tree Trimming Departments along with three great clerical staffers who keep the paper and payroll moving.*

*These departments usually consist of around 75 employees. These individuals deserve our support and gratitude, as they perform challenging, stressful and highly hazardous jobs under any conditions, let alone when restoring power to the system in the wake of powerful Pacific coast storms.*

*While supervising this outstanding team, I also deal with issues that arise in the operation, construction, maintenance and restoration of the District's electrical system, including manpower, tools, equipment and materials. In addition, I serve on a variety of committees and teams to bring operations viewpoints and concerns to the table with the mission of providing safe, reliable, and quality services to our customers and communities and address both customer and employee comments, questions and concerns, as it relates to the District's operations.*

*I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunities this trade has provided for me and my family, and it is truly an honor to serve and be a part of this community.*

### **Dale Benner**

*I have worked at the Grays Harbor PUD for 23 years and have worked in the positions of groundman, Journeyman Lineman, Line Foreman and now as the Safety and Environmental Director.*

*Having been involved in safety for a number of years, I have been associated with the Governors Electrical Advisory Committee, Pole Top Rescue Committee, as well as the District's Safety Committee.*

*Along with being involved in safety, I have always been aware of the environment in the course of my day-to-day activities.*

*In my new position at the PUD, I oversee all the safety and training programs as well as monitor the environmental needs of the District. In addition to my daily responsibilities for managing safety, I am also available to conduct public safety presentations for fire departments, schools and other public entities talking about safety awareness around downed power lines and provide general information about electrical safety.*

*continued on page 4*



continued from page 3

Another member of our Senior Leadership Team is new to GHPUD, though not new to the citizens in Grays Harbor who know him as the former News Director at KXRO and still the voice of most local sports teams in our county, Ian Cope. He is our Community and Government Relations Director.

## Ian Cope

*Communications and Government Relations pretty well sums up the last 15 years of my life. For 12 years I worked at KXRO radio and from 2011-2014 I served on the staff of the Washington State Senate Democratic Caucus. In 2013, I learned that my friend and mentor Liz Anderson was leaving the PUD, creating a vacancy in a position that involved the two areas in which I had worked for all of my professional life. It was too good an opportunity to pass up.*

*My new responsibilities include supervising both internal and external communications, but I believe that cultivating an honest and open relationship between the PUD and our customers is my most important job. The PUD is a part of the Grays Harbor community and as such, it must have a clear voice and a strong relationship with the community. That is where the Communications Director position can be key.*

*Familiarity with the men and women elected to lead our cities, county and state is also important and over my career, I have come to know and respect and be known and (I hope) respected by those leaders. Working together with our elected officials is an important component to the PUD's success and as Government Relations Director I have the opportunity to work with our elected officials to ensure that success for the benefit of the PUD and our community.*

This Commissioners Corner has been an opportunity for Steve, Dale and Ian to introduce themselves to you, our customers. I'd like to thank Steve and Dale for moving into a leadership position and Ian for joining our team. We are moving in a very positive direction. We will face many challenges in the future with many attacks on Public Power. We will have to make many difficult decisions. But with the leadership team we have in place I feel very confident of the choices we will make. We certainly have a team in place that I know will give us the proper information and guidance needed to make the best possible decisions for the citizens we are so proud to serve.

## Grays Harbor PUD Receives Recognition for Reliable Operations

The Grays Harbor Public Utility District's reputation for reliability is growing. The PUD is one of 184 of the nation's 2,000 public power utilities and one of four in Washington to earn the Reliable Public Power Provider (RP<sub>3</sub><sup>TM</sup>) designation from the American Public Power Association for providing their customers with the highest degree of reliable and safe electric service.

"This is a district-wide honor. Providing our community with reliable, quality services is a huge responsibility and it's one that everyone at the Grays Harbor PUD takes seriously," said General Manager Dave Ward. "We have made great strides over the last year to ensure that we have a system that our customers can rely on and this designation is a much appreciated recognition of that fact."

The RP<sub>3</sub><sup>TM</sup> designation recognizes public power utilities that demonstrate proficiency in four key areas: reliability, safety, workforce development and system improvement. The criteria within each category are based on sound business practices and represent a utility wide commitment to safe and reliable delivery of electricity.



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